

CITY COUNCIL
PUBLIC HEARING

3/21/2012 2pm

Testimony of Rachel Harvey in Support of Bill 10

Aloha Council,

RECEIVED

MAR 21 12 47 PM '12

CITY CLERK
HONOLULU, HAWAII

I am writing to comment in support of Bill 10. Regulating single-use plastic bags with a ban will help make Honolulu City and County a model for sustainable change.

Hawaii, especially Oahu, is at a crucial moment for waste management. Despite the efforts of the H-Power waste-to-energy program, our facilities and landfills are overwhelmed. According to an article in the Honolulu Advertiser (March 8, 2010), people on Oahu use an estimated "300 million bags or more annually." Legislating source reduction and behavior changing regulation is the targeted solution.

The harmful cost of single-use plastics stretches from the oil it takes to produce it, to the health of the consumer, to the cost of disposal, and finally to the marine ecosystems it wrecks. Plastic is a material that the Earth cannot digest. Once discarded in the environment, plastic breaks down into smaller and smaller particles. Patches of plastic pollution cover millions of square miles of ocean near Hawaii. Tragically, this plastic also ends up in the stomachs of marine birds and animals. Moreover, the creation and distribution of plastic products increases our polluting carbon emissions and dependence on fossil fuels. The U.S. goes through 100 billion plastic bags each year, requiring 12 million barrels of oil to produce, and less than 5% are ever recycled.

Reusable bags allow new avenues for marketing and save the retailer and consumer money. Reusable cloth and nylon bags can be purchased for a dollar (or are sometimes free) and used for years and years. Consumers actually pay hidden costs for so-called free bags. Further, reducing the consumption of single-use plastic bags will save money for our county in clean-up costs. The taxpayer cost to subsidize the recycling, collection, and disposal of plastic bags is often more than the cost of the bag.

This bill effectively addresses the issue of single-use check out bag plastic pollution by positively changing consumer behavior, decreasing external costs, and decreasing the amount of waste Hawaii produces.

I am a community coordinator for Plastic Free Hawaii (Kailua Chapter) by the Kokua Hawaii Foundation. We are a coalition of community members and businesses striving to educate the stores, restaurants, residents, and visitors of Kailua on the environmental and health benefits of going plastic free. <http://plasticfreekailua.blogspot.com/>

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

Sincerely,

Rachel Harvey, Ph.D.
Community Coordinator, Plastic Free Hawaii, Kailua Chapter
316 Keaniani St.
Kailua, HI 96734,
racheharvey@gmail.com

MISC. COM. 544

PH